

SPEAK NOW: MEMORIES OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ERA
RECORDING SESSIONS

Pauline Knight-Ofosu

Moderated by LeAnna Welch

Thursday, May 26, 2011

William Winter Archives and History Building
Jackson, Mississippi

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY
Post Office Box 571
Jackson., Mississippi 39205

AU 975

SN 002

Participant: Ofosu, Pauline Knight

Title: *Speak Now: Memories of the Civil Rights Era* / Memories of Pauline Knight-Ofosu, Thursday, May 26, 2011/ moderated by LeAnna Welch

Scope Note: The Mississippi Department of Archives and History in conjunction with the 50th Anniversary of the Freedom Rides and to complement the Department's exhibit "*Freedom Rides: Journey for Change*" conducted recording sessions with local citizens to gather oral memories of the Civil Rights Era. The participants were also given the opportunity to have their photograph taken in front of the exhibit. The recordings were conducted in the spring and summer of 2011 at the William F. Winter Archives and History Building in Jackson, Mississippi.

WELCH: Ok Speak Now recording number 002. This is Leanna Welch, with the Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Today's date is Thursday, May 26, 2011. Now sharing her Civil Rights Era memories is Ms. Pauline Ofosu.

KNIGHT-OFOSU: Pauline *Knight* Ofosu.

WELCH: Pauline Knight Ofosu.

KNIGHT-OFOSU: That's right.

WELCH: Ok?

KNIGHT-OFOSU: Thank you. As we've said, my name is Pauline Knight-Ofosu and 50 years ago I was 20 years old, and a student at Tennessee A&I State University. The name has been changed to Tennessee State University in Nashville, Tennessee. It is an HBCU meaning, a historically black college and university.

I would like generations to know that in my opinion, the Freedom Rides was not anything organized or conjured up by any one individual. I am convinced that everybody participating as a Freedom Rider was chosen by God. I am so convinced that I want you to hear how I came to be a Civil Rights worker and a Freedom Rider.

About five years before I participated as a Freedom Rider, I was moved to understand Bible stories much better than I had been before. My parents were excellent Bible students, all of my brothers and sisters had their own Bibles and we were encouraged to read them, among other things. And I spent hours for about five years going over and over various stories. I had to get a really good grip on Abraham and both his sons, Ishmael and Isaac, and it was my understanding that being Christian, we had come from the line that Isaac was, and so we were following Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But I do understand that Ishmael and Abraham loved one another and they buried their father together. It was also important because around 1961 the Black Muslim Movement in America was being more introduced than I had ever heard it before and it was important for me to understand Ishmael as well as Isaac. And from thereon I understood more about Jesus and His love, and I'm telling you, and I want it understood, that, in my opinion, the Freedom Rides was a God-orchestrated event that caught up the whole world like the people were caught up in—on the Day of Pentecost and when they spoke, everyone present heard what they needed to hear in their own language. I don't think there's a man alive who can testify that they brought that about. And so, I'm here to say that we didn't just happen—I used to say that we were called and now I say we were ordered because everybody was where they were supposed to be, doing what they were supposed to be

doing. Everyone participating while we were all together has a different story to tell, and my prayer is that in some way a possibility will happen that you will hear the story that you need to hear. But the greatest thing of all is love heals all wounds, rights all wrongs, love is impartial and universal, and that truth is freeing, liberating, and it will set you free no matter what your predicament may be.

END OF RECORDING

INDEX

Bible – 1,
Black Muslim Movement - 1
Christianity - 1
Family – 1
Freedom Riders – 1
God - 1
Historically Black Colleges and Universities - 1
Isaac - 1
Ishmael – 1
Nashville, Tennessee - 1
Tennessee A &I University (Tennessee State University) - 1